

Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports

Ethiopia

Concluding observations: 30th session

226. The Committee considered the combined fourth and fifth periodic report of Ethiopia (CEDAW/C/ETH/4-5) at its 646th and 647th meetings, held on 26 and 30 January 2004 (see CEDAW/C/SR.646 and 647).

Introduction by the State party

227. In introducing the combined fourth and fifth periodic report, the representative of Ethiopia explained that, under the Constitution, fundamental rights and freedoms were to be interpreted in conformity with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two international covenants on human rights and international instruments ratified by Ethiopia. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had thus become part of Ethiopian law. Various measures, including reform of family law, had been taken to uphold constitutional rights. An independent judiciary implemented those rights and civil society promoted them at the grass-roots level. Although it was not yet fully operational, an Office of Ombudsman dealing with women's and children's affairs had also been established.

228. A considerable number of machineries had been set up at different levels of government, from the Women's Affairs Office in the Office of the Prime Minister to women's affairs departments in 16 sectoral ministries and in all regional governments. Gender focal points had been established in each *woreda* (district) to incorporate gender issues in local development programmes.

229. Public debates, awareness campaigns and advocacy had been carried out in order to combat discrimination and to popularize gender equality and other human rights. Various human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, had been translated into Amharic, the local working language. In addition, the media had played a key role in awareness-raising and promoting gender equality and gender issues, while the Ethiopia Media Women's Association, established in May 1999, contributed to improving the image of women in the media. A national committee on harmful traditional practices had been established as a policy initiative to eliminate discrimination and enhance the advancement of women. Some legal measures had also been adopted or were under way to tackle violence against women, including harmful traditional practices. Networks had been established, including networks on violence against women, female genital mutilation, gender and leadership and girls' education.

230. A national committee chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had undertaken a number of activities in respect of migration and trafficking. A proclamation (No. 104/998) prohibiting trafficking and illegal migration of women had been issued, rules preventing the issuance of exit visas to persons without proper work contracts had been established, consular offices had been opened in some receiving countries and experiences had been shared with countries with large numbers of migrants.

231. The representative indicated that her Government recognized that women's participation in political matters was crucial to ensuring gender equality and that measures had been taken in this regard. She stated that large numbers of women had participated as voters in the last two elections, in 1995

and 2000, and that women had been elected to the House of Peoples' Representatives (Parliament) and the State (Regional) Council.

232. Measures had been taken to ensure equal access of girls to education and to increase enrolment and the retention rate of girls at all levels. They included higher budget allocations for regional schools that increase the enrolment of girls and decrease the drop-out and repetition rates; the reservation of 30 per cent of places in public high educational institutions for women; the reservation of 50 per cent of places for women at the Teachers Training Institute; and the inclusion of gender as a main component of civic education starting in primary schools. With respect to employment, the Federal Civil Service Commission had instituted a reform that gave priority to women in employment, including promotions. Affirmative action provisions had been adopted to bring women into leadership and decision-making positions within the civil service. Women in the civil service were also entitled to maternity leave with pay both before and after their confinement. Other strategies included facilitation of the establishment of microfinance institutions by non-governmental organizations and other partners, and the establishment of the Ethiopian Women's Development Fund and Women's Development Initiative Project.

233. The delivery of health services to women had expanded, with an improved referral system that was especially beneficial to women. Efforts had also been undertaken to combat the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which included projects that aimed to reduce women's vulnerability. For the sake of preventing mother-to-child transmission, the Government had started to provide anti-retroviral drugs free of charge to pregnant women living with HIV/AIDS.

234. In conclusion, the representative indicated that, while the legal and political environment was highly conducive to promoting the advancement of women, many challenges had been encountered in the implementation of policies and programmes. These included insufficient skilled human resources, unavailability of data disaggregated by sex in most economic and social sectors, and the lack of clear and effective indicators for gender mainstreaming in development programmes and projects. She suggested that the political commitment that existed at the higher political level was perhaps sometimes lost at the lower level, where programme implementation was to be realized.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

235. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for its combined fourth and fifth periodic report, while regretting the fact that the report does not fully comply with the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports.

236. The Committee congratulates the State party for its high-level delegation, headed by the Minister of State for Women's Affairs. The Committee appreciates the frank and constructive dialogue held between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

Positive aspects

237. The Committee appreciates the political commitment expressed by the State party to implementing the provisions of the Convention and to further improving the progress achieved so far in some areas.

238. The Committee welcomes the revision of the family code and the ongoing revision of the penal code by the State party to eliminate the provisions that are discriminatory towards women.

239. The Committee appreciates the establishment of a comprehensive national machinery for the advancement of women at different governmental

levels, which includes the Women's Affairs Office, women's affairs departments in various ministries, and gender focal points in each district.

240. The Committee commends the State party for the temporary special measures introduced in the civil service and in education, in particular the allocation of at least 30 per cent of the total number of university seats to female students. It also commends the State party for the introduction of the girl's scholarship programme, covering 28 schools in 7 regions, and the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in the school curriculum.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

241. The Committee, while welcoming the integration of the Convention and the inclusion of equality provisions in the Constitution, is concerned about the slow progress in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention in the State party since the consideration of the State party's combined initial, second and third periodic report in 1996.

242. The Committee urges the State party to enforce the supremacy of the Constitution over regional laws and encourages it to proceed, as a matter of urgency, with the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention throughout the country, including through enhanced cooperation between the federal and regional governmental bodies and institutions, so as to achieve uniformity of results in the implementation of the Convention. It calls on the State party to enhance its efforts for, and systematically monitor progress achieved in, the implementation of the Convention at all levels and in all areas. To that end, the Committee recommends that the State party place particular focus on improving the capacity of all public officials in the area of women's human rights and seek resources through international development assistance programmes, as necessary. The Committee also calls on the State party to launch, at the national level, a comprehensive programme of dissemination of the Convention, targeting women and men, in order to enhance awareness about and promote and protect the rights of women.

243. The Committee, while welcoming the revision of the family code regulating marriage and family relations, is concerned that it has not yet been adopted by all regions.

244. The Committee encourages the State party to ensure that regional governments adopt and duly implement the Family Code without delay and take all necessary measures, including awareness-raising measures, to sensitize the population about the revised Family Code.

245. The Committee, while welcoming the establishment of the national machinery for the advancement of women, is concerned that the machinery suffers from insufficient decision-making power and inadequate human and financial resources to effectively promote the advancement of women and gender equality. The Committee also expresses its concern about the lack of an integrated policy of gender mainstreaming at the federal level.

246. The Committee recommends that the State party expeditiously strengthen the existing national machinery and provide it with adequate human and financial resources at all levels in order to increase its effectiveness in mainstreaming gender perspectives in all policies and in promoting women's human rights.

247. The Committee expresses concern about the insufficient sex-disaggregated statistical data contained in the report with regard to the areas covered by the Convention.

248. The Committee recommends the systematic and comprehensive compilation of sex-disaggregated data and its analysis reflecting the situation of women in all areas covered by the Convention.

249. The Committee, while welcoming the State party's efforts in the area of education, is concerned at the low rate of female literacy, the continuing gap between boys and girls in the school enrolment rate and at the high drop-out and repetition rates among girls.

250. The Committee urges the State party to strengthen its efforts to improve the literacy rate of girls and women in rural and urban areas, to ensure equal access of girls and young women to all levels of education and to take measures to reduce and eliminate the high drop-out and repetition rates of girls. It encourages the State party to introduce temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and general recommendation 25 at primary and secondary levels of education, including incentives for parents to send girls to school. It also recommends that the State party take steps to ensure that rural women and girls have full access to education and vocational training.

251. The Committee is concerned about the continuing persistence of entrenched traditional discriminatory practices, including the 80 per cent of girls and women who undergo female genital mutilation and inheritance of a widow with all her property, and strong stereotypical attitudes in respect of the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, which negatively affect women's enjoyment of their human rights.

252. The Committee urges the State party to increase its efforts to design and implement comprehensive awareness-raising programmes targeting women and men in order to foster a better understanding of equality between women and men at all levels of society, with a view to changing negative social and cultural patterns of conduct and stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society and to eliminate female genital mutilation and widowhood practices. The Committee also calls upon the State party to periodically review the measures taken in order to better assess their impact and to report thereon to the Committee in its next report. The Committee recommends that the State party take action without delay to end all discriminatory traditional practices.

253. The Committee, while welcoming the fact that the age of marriage has been set at 18 years for both girls and boys, is concerned about the persistence of the practice of early marriage, which may be perpetuated further by the non-registration of births.

254. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to achieve free and timely registration of all births and undertake awareness-raising measures, throughout the country, particularly in rural areas, on the importance of registering births and the negative effects of early marriage on women's enjoyment of human rights, especially the rights to health and education.

255. The Committee is concerned that no specific legislation has been enacted to combat violence against women, including domestic violence, and at the lack of systematic data collection on violence against women, particularly domestic violence. The Committee is also concerned that, while abduction has been recognized as a crime under the Ethiopian criminal code, the implementation of the law is weak and abductions tend to be resolved through discriminatory customary laws and practice. The Committee is also concerned about the incidence of rape in the country.

256. The Committee urges the State party to expedite the adoption and implementation of a national strategy to combat violence against women, to include, inter alia, legislation on violence against women, including domestic violence; the collection of data on all forms of violence against women; and research into the extent of violence against women and girls. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure that all forms of

violence against women are prosecuted and punished adequately and that victims have immediate means of redress and protection, in accordance with general recommendation 19. The Committee also recommends that the State party step up its efforts, through public awareness and education campaigns targeting the general public, with a particular focus on the judiciary, the police and medical personnel, to bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes to make such violence socially and morally unacceptable.

257. The Committee is concerned about the very low level of life expectancy for women, the high rate of maternal mortality and the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women. The Committee is also concerned at the high rate of clandestine abortion and its causes, which include poverty, a lack of access to information on women's reproductive health and rights and low prevalence of contraceptive use.

258. The Committee recommends the adoption of measures to guarantee effective access for women, including young women, to health-care information and services, in particular regarding reproductive health, with the aim of reducing clandestine abortions. It further recommends that programmes and policies be adopted to increase knowledge about and access to affordable contraceptive methods, as well as to increase the understanding that family planning is the responsibility of both partners. The Committee also recommends that sex education be widely promoted and provided, targeting men, women and adolescent boys and girls, with special attention to the prevention and further control of HIV/AIDS.

259. The Committee, while welcoming the implementation of the Women's Development Initiative Project and the Ethiopian Women's Development Fund, is concerned that the Fund currently reaches only a small percentage of women, and that poverty among women, in particular rural women, continues to persist at a high level.

260. The Committee urges the State party to expand its specific programmes aimed at enhancing the socio-economic well-being of women and step up its efforts to fully integrate gender perspectives in its sustainable development and poverty reduction programme. It also urges the State party to take measures to ensure that the rights, needs and concerns of rural women are given greater attention and visibility and that rural women participate fully in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of all sectoral policies and programmes. It calls upon the State party to put in place policies to protect women's right to property and to ensure that women have access to land and water resources on an equal basis with men.

261. The Committee is concerned about the discrimination faced by women in the labour market, especially in the emerging private sector.

262. The Committee urges the State party to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market through, inter alia, the use of temporary special measures, according to article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and general recommendation 25. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures to promote the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities between women and men. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, detailed information on the situation of women in the formal and informal labour market, including women's occupations in the different sectors of the economy, their levels of seniority in the different sectors, and their respective wages.

263. The Committee, while noting the slight increase in women's political participation, is concerned that the representation of women in decision-making positions in the various areas and levels of political and public life is still low.

264. The Committee requests the State party, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, to take effective measures, such as implementation of targeted training programmes and awareness-raising campaigns, to encourage women to participate in public life and to highlight the importance to the society as a whole of women's full and equal participation in the development and decision-making processes, in accordance with general recommendation 23 on women in public and political life.

265. The Committee, while welcoming the establishment of a national committee on migration, is concerned about the increasing number of Ethiopian women migrating to other countries in search of work and finding themselves in situations where they are vulnerable to various forms of violence, exploitation and trafficking.

266. The Committee urges the State party to step up its efforts to protect women migrant workers; prevent the activities of illegal employment agencies; ensure that women are provided with adequate information on safe migration before departure; and conclude bilateral agreements with receiving countries. It also recommends that the State party consider acceding to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

267. The Committee notes with concern that no information on the situation of older women and women with disabilities was included in the report.

268. The Committee requests the State party to provide in its next report disaggregated data and information on the situation of older women and women with disabilities, including with regard to employment, education and health, and on measures taken in this regard.

269. The Committee notes with concern that women's non-governmental organizations were not consulted in the process of preparation of the report.

270. The Committee recommends that the State party take concrete steps to create a conducive environment for the establishment and operation of women's non-governmental organizations and to facilitate the active participation of civil society in the full implementation of the Convention and the promotion of women's human rights. The Committee urges the State party to cooperate more effectively with non-governmental organizations and women's associations in the implementation of the Convention, including in follow-up to the concluding comments. The Committee recommends that the State party consult with non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the next periodic report.

271. The Committee requests the State party to respond to the concerns expressed in the present concluding comments in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to submit its sixth periodic report, which was due in 2002, and its seventh periodic report, due in 2006, in a combined report in 2006.

272. Taking account of the gender dimensions of declarations, programmes and platforms for action adopted by relevant United Nations conferences, summits and special sessions, such as the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (the twenty-first special session), the special session of the General Assembly on children (the twenty-seventh special session) and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the Committee requests the State party to include information on the implementation of aspects of those documents relating to relevant articles of the Convention in its next periodic report.

273. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Ethiopia of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Ethiopia, in particular government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality for women and the future steps required in that regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century".